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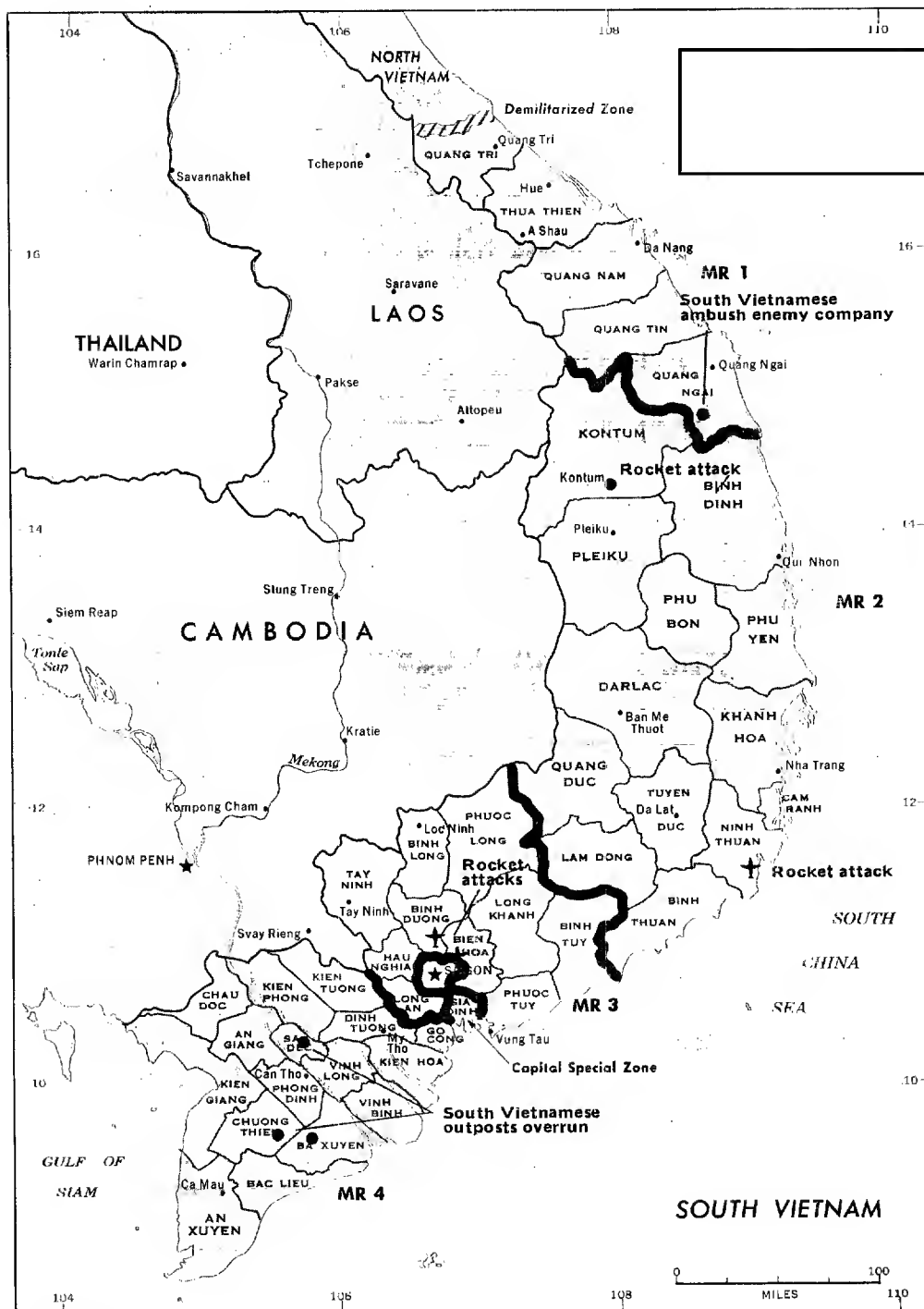
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SOUTH VIETNAM: Military activity picked up over the weekend in widely separated areas of the country, but so far no Communist main force units have been involved.

Communist rocket and mortar attacks were directed at several allied air bases and provincial capitals, as well as against a number of South Vietnamese field positions and outposts. An eight-round rocket bombardment of Kontum city was the most damaging, killing 20 civilians and wounding ten. Several ground attacks were also made against small outposts defending remote villages and hamlets. Two hamlet chiefs were among the 35 killed in two attacks yesterday in the delta.

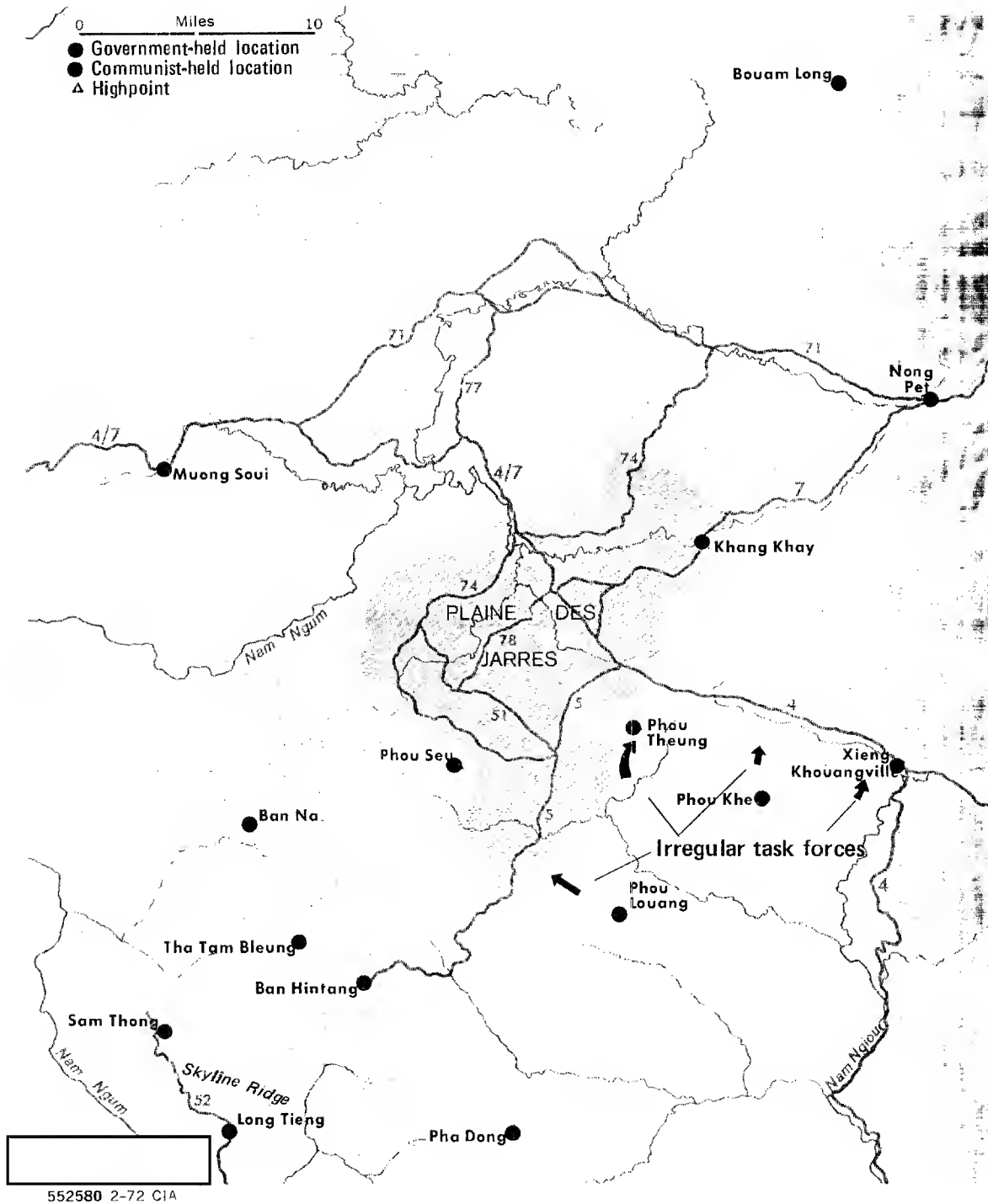
Some of the increased fighting was the result of allied patrols and operations designed to disrupt enemy preparations for a new offensive. One of these actions took place in Quang Ngai Province where South Vietnamese forces ambushed an enemy company, killed 62, and seized 22 weapons. South Vietnamese forces throughout the country were placed on full alert on 19 February and intensive pre-emptive artillery and air strikes are being conducted.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



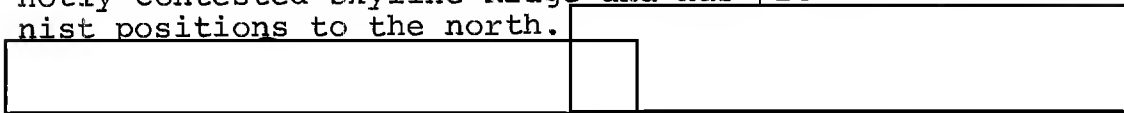
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C LAOS: Vang Pao's offensive has slowed as Communist resistance stiffens near the Plaine des Jarres.

In a clear effort to protect vital lines of communication, the Communists over the weekend launched sharp ground probes and attacks by fire against irregular forces moving toward the Plaine. One irregular task force that was targeted against a suspected 130-mm. artillery position on the southern edge of the Plaine is now tied down in the hills near Phou Louang, while another force has been unable to push on toward the high ground at Phou Theung. To the east, two other task forces have encountered less resistance, but they too have not moved significantly closer to their objectives near Route 4.

The irregulars thus far have not directly harassed Communist supply movements along Routes 4 and 5, but their presence southeast of the Plaine has forced the Communists to divert troops from the Long Tieng area. There is some evidence that Communist combat units in addition to the NVA's 174th and 148th regiments have pulled back to help counter the threat in the rear area. The tactical situation in the immediate Long Tieng - Sam Thong area continues to improve somewhat as irregular units begin to patrol more vigorously. One small force, for example, has now moved down the north slope of the once hotly contested Skyline Ridge and has probed Communist positions to the north.



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USSR: Party and government leaders of the 15 republics met late last week in Moscow with Brezhnev to assess the damage to winter grains caused by the severe cold.

Abnormally low temperatures hit the Eastern Ukraine, the North Caucasus, and the Volga Valley in mid-January and there is little snow cover to protect seedlings in these areas, the heart of the winter wheat belt. The severe cold occurred in 45 percent of the winter wheat area.

The USSR has lost a large portion of its winter grains about every four years because of harsh weather. In 1969 about one third of the area sown to winter grains was lost or had to be harvested for forage. At times this winter, temperatures have been about as low as in 1969, and the lack of protective snow cover has been about as serious.

Damage this year will ultimately depend on the weather this spring. Much of the loss can be recouped by reseeding with spring grains and by heavier fertilizing of the surviving winter grains. Resowing requires an additional investment in seed, however. Yields of spring grains are generally less than those of winter grains, moreover, and a severe winter often lowers the yields of the remaining winter grains. If the winterkill is as extensive as in 1969, the net loss could amount to about four percent of the planned grain crop, or seven million tons--almost as much as the USSR planned to import this year.



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IAEA-EURATOM: The third round of IAEA-EURATOM negotiations on safeguards required by the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) begins today, but an early agreement may not be possible.

The NPT, which entered into force in March 1970, requires the IAEA to verify that non-nuclear-weapon adherents do not divert fissionable materials from peaceful applications. These verification arrangements were to be in effect by next month, but they have been delayed for a number of reasons. The arrangements between the IAEA and EURATOM are the most sensitive, because they must take into account the only regional safeguards system in existence and involve several states with advanced non-military nuclear programs.

In an effort to move the negotiations with EURATOM along, the IAEA staff recently offered a forthcoming set of proposals to accept essentially the EURATOM position that, as a matter of routine, IAEA personnel need only verify EURATOM records rather than inspect civilian nuclear operations. West German industrialists have been especially insistent on this procedure, maintaining that more rigorous IAEA inspections could put them at a commercial disadvantage vis-a-vis nuclear competitors such as France. Bonn will not ratify the NPT until it is satisfied with the terms of the safeguards agreement.

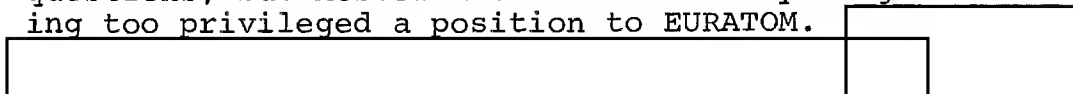
France, which is not a party to the NPT nor to the talks with the IAEA, has lately been hinting that it may stir up new problems for its EURATOM partners. Paris professes to have difficulty with the EURATOM position on the IAEA's policing of international transfers of fissionable materials. The French also allege that any sanctions invoked against EURATOM as a community might affect France even though it is not a party to the agreement with the IAEA.

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The IAEA-EURATOM negotiations are also being closely watched by Tokyo. The Japanese want the safeguards on their facilities to be no more onerous than those on EURATOM and have conditioned their ratification of the NPT on this. The Soviets have recently maintained a low profile on safeguards questions, but Moscow also will be chary of granting too privileged a position to EURATOM.



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NOTES

ZAIRE: President Mobutu Sese Seko has reshuffled his cabinet and the political bureau of the official party. The cabinet changes, a periodic feature of Mobutu's rule, apparently do not change the structure of the government, but they will give Mobutu new people in his economic ministries at a time of strong public criticism of Zaire's deteriorating economy. The cut in political bureau membership--from 34 to 14--is apparently aimed at tightening the party's leadership and making it more responsive to Mobutu's direction. The cut is likely to be viewed with alarm by the army, which is resentful of the party's increasing political importance. [REDACTED]

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PHILIPPINES-CHINA: The recent visit to Peking of President Marcos' personal emissary may have set the stage for expanded ties. The ten-day visit of Marcos' brother-in-law, Benjamin Romualdez, coincided with statements by the government that it would seek closer trade and political relations with Communist countries. It seems likely that Romualdez raised the question of trade relations during talks with Premier Chou En-lai. The Manila press is citing sources close to Marcos as saying that the Chinese have agreed that trade relations could take place even in the absence of diplomatic relations. Public confirmation of the Romualdez trip has increased speculation in Manila that Mrs. Marcos will also go to China this year. [REDACTED]

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EL SALVADOR: With most of the votes counted, the governing party's presidential candidate, Colonel Molina, has won a slight plurality in Sunday's four-way race. Neither he nor his nearest rival, Napoleon Duarte of the leftist coalition, however, has the necessary majority to win and the legislature now will have to choose between the two front-runners. Opposition leaders have accused the government of altering the election results in an effort to defraud Duarte of a win. No disorders have materialized except for a minor student demonstration.

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